



## SUBJECT: FY 1996 and 1997 TNRCC Solid Waste Grants Program Overview

In the Spring of 1995, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 3072, resulting in a significant change in the state's solid waste grants program, which is administered by the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC). HB 3072 changed how Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) landfill fee revenue appropriated to the agency is to be used. A full *one-half* of this revenue is now dedicated to grants for regional and local governments. The remainder of this revenue will go toward MSW permitting and enforcement and related programs at the agency.

In the past, less than one-half of the generated revenue was used for grants. In 1995, the amount available for solid waste grants totaled \$7 million. As a result of HB 3072, however, approximately \$10 million in grants will be awarded to regional and local governments for solid waste management projects in fiscal years 1996 and 1997.

All solid waste grant money from the TNRCC will be allocated to the councils of government (COG) in the state's 24 planning regions.

As the 1996 grant program is already underway, those interested in 1997 grants should start planning now – that grant cycle will begin as early as May, 1996 – so programs can get underway in September.

HB 3072 outlined several other important provisions that impact how the grant funds can be used: all projects funded by the grant money must be consistent with regional solid waste plans

approved by TNRCC and the funding may be used to update and maintain the regional plans.

The grants must be allocated to municipal solid waste geographic planning regions according to a formula established by TNRCC. The legislation required the formula to reflect population, area, solid waste fee generation, and public health needs.

Based on the new formula, funding for the state's 24 planning regions ranges from \$150,000 in the more rural areas of the state, to \$2 million in the most heavily-populated metropolitan area.

Local governments are eligible for these grants from the COGs. Local governments eligible for these grants include cities, counties, public schools and school districts, and certain general and special law districts. Although grant funds are not available to non-profit or private businesses, regional and local governments may sub-contract with these organizations.

TNRCC identified a wide range of grant categories. The priority categories include waste reduction and recycling, household hazardous waste management, and local enforcement. Solid waste grants may also be awarded for public education programs, scales at landfills, a limited amount of technical studies and local plans, citizen collection stations, and a few other categories.

COGs have the flexibility to award grants based on the priorities identified in the regional plans. The COG determines which grant categories will receive funding. Prior to development of

requests for proposals (RFPs), COG staff held public meetings in each region to get input on the categories proposed.

Although TNRCC's focus is on allowing regional and local governments to select the projects to be funded, certain expenditures are ineligible. This includes acquisition of land, waste disposal, landfilling expenses, and projects requiring a TNRCC permit.

Once the COGs begin to contract with local governments, and projects and programs get underway, the COG staff will also monitor pass-through grants. The primary responsibilities of the COGs will be to ensure that grant funds are used for the intended purpose, contract responsibilities are met, and positive, tangible results are realized for this grant program.

TNRCC and COG staff will be asking grant recipients to collect specific information about the results of their projects and programs. This will allow TNRCC, the COGs and local governments to identify the successes and accomplishments realized through this new program.

Anyone interested in applying for funds should contact the appropriate COG to get on its mailing list for fiscal year 1997 grant RFPs. Comments or questions about the new state solid waste grants program can be addressed to the appropriate COG or TNRCC's Waste Planning and Assessment Division at (512) 239-6809. Additional information can be obtained via the Internet at <http://www.tnrcc.state.tx.us/waste/wpna/mswplan/index.html>.

